

Rolling Thunder... Cruisin with the Rough Riders

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

A throaty roar and flashes of sunlight from the chrome and custom paint on James V. "Butch" Stubblefield's Harley-Davidson announces his arrival in the parking lot in front of the Old Brooke Army Medical Center on Fort Sam Houston, Texas. As he cruises into the lot, Stubblefield cuts a narrow arc and rolls into a slot dedicated for motorcycles, where his Harley is far from alone. Next to it sits a Japanese V-twin "retro" bike reflecting styling cues from the classic American-built Indian motorcycle. A few slots down a brightly painted Suzuki Hayabusa, boasted as the world's fastest production sport bike, glows in the hot Texas sun. Some of the world's most classic and exciting motorcycles rest on two wheels and a kickstand in that lot. Yet, diverse as these bikes are, they have one thing in common—no scratches, dents or dings. These bikes don't go sliding down the road on their sides or tumbling into ditches—their riders see to that.

They call themselves the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club. They proudly wear their club's patch and they'll tell you in a heartbeat they're not an "outlaw" motorcycle club. They're not interested in sharing

the reputation outlaw clubs have for riding on the wrong side of the law. Still, wearing patches and being part of a group has a powerful attraction, one familiar to Soldiers who've known the



camaraderie and pride of belonging to a proud unit. For three years, the Rough Riders* have molded that pride into a passion for riding expertly and safely. And at a time when motorcycle accidents are killing an increasing number of Soldiers, the Rough Riders can claim an accident-free record.

The club started in 2003 when Stubblefield, an Army civilian at the United States Army South (USARSO), began riding with two other riders in the organization,

Ezell Powell and MAJ Juan Rosas. Stubblefield explained, "We got to talking and thought, 'Why don't we start something—there are a lot of motorcycle riders in USARSO.

... It's a lot more fun to ride in a group than it is to ride individually. It's safer and cars seem to see you more.'"

Camaraderie played a big part in the decision to start the club. The club's goal was to blend the traditional bond between riders with the "band of brothers" feeling Soldiers have for each other in a unit.

Also, there's safety in numbers when motorcycles hit the road. "When you ride as an individual, you're by yourself in the lane," Stubblefield said. "When you ride in a group, you're staggered (bikes on the left and right sides of the lane) and fill the lane. If drivers don't see one rider, they'll see another."

The visibility issue is important to Stubblefield. While riding to work one morning, his Harley-Davidson was rear-ended at a stoplight by a careless driver (see the article "Only One Chance").

Visibility wasn't the only issue the group could affect. Motorcycle clubs develop their own culture, one that determines how members ride. That culture can promote either riding recklessly or responsibly. When Powell, a sport bike rider, was assigned to

Fort Huachuca, Ariz., in 2000, he discovered the local off-post riding club had a “keep up or shut up” culture. As a result, riders often ended their ride in an ambulance. To counter that, Powell started a club focused on safe riding and providing a family-friendly environment. To make the club part of the post and have access to the facilities for family events, he applied through Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) for approval as a private organization. In the process, he developed the necessary bylaws and constitution for the club. The club succeeded and motorcycle accidents dropped off. Powell’s experience would prove invaluable when he came to USARSO in 2004.

Powell wasn’t alone when it came to starting a riding club for Soldiers. A year earlier, Stubblefield took a less formal route to encourage riders at his organization to ride together under the name USARSO Riders. Using e-mail, talking to people and handing out cards, he created a contact list to alert members about rides and invite them to come along.

The idea proved popular and, as the list grew, Stubblefield expanded membership beyond USARSO to include other interested riders on post. He also began working with the installation safety office to get Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) training for riders, ultimately scheduling 18 of them for the Experienced RiderCourseSM. As new motorcycle riders checked out the club, they were paired with experienced riders for a six-month trial period. If they rode safely and showed they had the skills, they could be voted in as members (see the related article, “Mentorship from the Start”). When Powell arrived in 2004, he


encouraged a break with tradition, resulting in cruisers and sport bikes riding together in the club. Late in 2005, the club decided to seek official recognition on post. Using his past experience at Fort Huachuca, Powell helped draft the club’s constitution and bylaws as Stubblefield applied to MWR for approval as a non-profit organization. Approval would allow them to meet on post and also sponsor rides supporting local charities dedicated to helping injured Soldiers and their families.

Still, there were several bumps in the road. No one had ever created a motorcycle club at Fort Sam Houston, and MWR personnel were uncertain how to handle the request. Also, Stubblefield found Army regulations wouldn’t allow him to use his unit as part of the club’s name. Realizing they could no longer be the USARSO Riders but still wanting a name with a distinctly Army flavor, they decided on the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club. Following protocol, Stubblefield contacted all area motorcycle clubs to ensure there weren’t any problems with the Rough Riders name, patch or purpose.

Army Regulation 210-22 set forth other requirements. Among those, the club had to be approved by the post commander, couldn’t hold the government liable for the club’s actions or debts and had to furnish copies of its constitution and bylaws for review. Finding insurance to cover the club and protect its members from any liability issues was very challenging. However, Stubblefield eventually located a company that was willing to provide adequate insurance at a charge within the club’s means.

The timing, however, was perfect. The club’s move to be

recognized on Fort Sam Houston coincided with the start of the Army Motorcycle Mentorship Program’s (MMP) test phase. Although fine-tuning his letter to MWR to gain permission to operate as a private organization took a lot of effort, Stubblefield eventually gained the needed approval. At the same time, Powell compared the club’s constitution and bylaws to those proposed under the MMP. He found only a few minor differences, which were easy to reconcile. What was perhaps more amazing was the club’s leaders and the creators of the MMP had independently arrived at the same destination.

The story could happily end at this point—but there’s much more. Experience has shown that MSF training, good as it is, doesn’t guarantee riders will be safe. Ultimately, the rider must choose to be safe. But what does it take to get riders to make that choice? Seeking the answer to that question has been frustrating. The good news is the Rough Riders have found a powerful, effective answer. Read about it in the article titled “Motivating the Rider.” 

**Editor’s Note: The shortened name “Rough Riders” in this issue of ImpaX refers only to the club operating out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas. There is a separate nationwide “Rough Riders Motorcycle Club” dedicated to supporting veterans.*

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Rolling Thunder... Mentorship from the Start

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The concept of mentoring new riders at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, did not begin with the Army's Motorcycle Mentorship Program (MMP). Long before, James V. Stubblefield and Ezell Powell, leaders of the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club, had seen the need as they rode the streets of San Antonio. While the MMP was just beginning its six-month testing phase, the Rough Riders, developed from the earlier USARSO* Riders, already had more than two years' experience. In fact, the need to mentor new riders was one of the reasons the club was originally established.

"Soldiers who'd never ridden before were going out and buying massive bikes," Stubblefield said. He explained he met a number of these riders and decided to ride with a couple to see how they handled themselves on the road. It wasn't pretty.

"One guy was riding around wearing earphones and listening to his radio while jumping out in front of traffic," Stubblefield said. "I was thinking, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa—what are you doing? Slow down—don't be in a hurry, we'll get there.' At that point, I realized there were people out there who had no

clue what they were doing."

The answer, as Stubblefield saw it, was to pair these people with more experienced riders. Ideally, those riders would be NCOs whose built-in leadership skills would make them effective trainers. Riders fresh out of Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) training would



be assigned a mentor for the first six months they rode with the club. The mentor's job would be to ensure the new rider practiced his MSF skills without developing bad habits in the process. One advantage the Rough Riders riding club had was they included cruisers and sport bikes. That made it possible to match riders and mentors with similar riding tastes.

Beyond reinforcing MSF training, mentors would also teach new riders practical lessons about riding safety that only experience can bring. For instance, Stubblefield said, riders who've pulled into a spot in a parking lot can't assume they're safe. Because vehicles

parked on either side can hide their motorcycles from view, riders can be hit by drivers hurriedly pulling in to slots they think are empty. Then there is the problem of tailgating. Stubblefield said riders must constantly watch the driver behind them and gauge that driver's ability to stop in an

emergency. It's essential, he added, riders ensure they have an escape route to avoid being crushed by a tailgating car.

Another part of mentoring is helping new riders select their first motorcycle (see the related article "Matching Riders to Machines"). Mentors can pair new riders with bikes they can control and enjoy riding. All too often, unmentored riders buy more machine than they can handle. After dropping these bikes or sliding them down the road, riders often sell them, taking a big financial loss and choosing never to ride again. The goal of motorcycle mentorship is not only to keep riders safe, it's also to make sure riding is an enjoyable part of a person's life for many years to come. 🏍️

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Rolling Thunder... Motivating the Rider

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A Soldier graduates Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) training and within days kills himself on his bike. You say, "That's not supposed to happen!" The truth is, however, it does. In fact, several recent Army motorcycle fatalities fit all or part of that description. What is becoming obvious is training, by itself, doesn't make a safe rider. There has to be something more—something that motivates them to choose to ride safely. But what is that "something?" Answering that question has been a challenge for those dedicated to motorcycle safety. The good news is an effective answer lies in something tried and true—the familiar tools used by the Army to build esprit-de-corps—pride, honor and a sense of belonging. Here's how it works for the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club.

Pride

- Membership is an earned privilege—you have to prove you're worthy to ride with the club. You do that by getting trained and consistently demonstrating the right skills and attitude. The group disciplines itself and will not tolerate

riders who ignore safety and imperil other club members.

- Wearing the group's patch is a badge of distinction, one that marks out riders as part of something special. Only those who prove themselves safe, skillful riders get to wear that patch.
- The "Rough Riders" name speaks of a brave moment in Army history. Members are proud to wear that name because they, like the famed Rough Riders of the Spanish-American War, serve as volunteers in the Army.
- The club is by and for Soldiers. Nobody forced it on them, they created it themselves. That allows Soldiers the pride of ownership.
- The club rides teach teamwork and discipline, helping riders hone their skills and rewarding them with a pride born of proficiency.

Honor

- By sponsoring and participating in rides supporting military charities, the group honors fellow Soldiers and their families. By riding for something more than themselves, riders bring respect upon themselves and the club.

Belonging

Rider mentoring clubs are desperately needed, according to



Rough Rider's President James V. Stubblefield, to counter other groups that might attract Soldiers and lead them to ride dangerously. He's convinced giving Soldiers a positive alternative will drive down the Army's motorcycle fatality rates—keeping Soldiers in uniform and fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters alive for their families. And his belief is based upon something more than hope. During the three years the Rough Riders and the earlier USARSO* Riders have existed, not a single member has had an at-fault accident or gotten a ticket. Success is success. How can you argue with a perfect record? 🏆

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CONNECTIONS

To learn more about the Army's Motorcycle Mentorship Program, visit the program's Web site at <https://crc.army.mil/mmp/index.asp>.

Rolling Thunder... Toeing the Line

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Riding with the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club means upholding standards designed to protect the club's integrity and ensure member safety. The duties and responsibilities for club members are listed below:

1. Members will, above all, uphold the basic club principles of honor, truth, respect, support, loyalty and commitment.
2. When representing the club on and off the installation, all members will conduct themselves with the highest regard for the club's principles. The club must not be tarnished by unrestrained behavior, disrespect of fellow citizens, or acts that generally reflect poorly on the club's image and reputation.
3. Members will not endanger the club or any member by an illegal act or acts. If a member is arrested for illegal activity, they will automatically be suspended from club activities and, if found guilty of the offense(s), dismissed from the club.
4. All club members must obtain the minimum safety clothing items recommended by the Motorcycle Safety

Foundation (and any military installation they enter) while operating their motorcycle as a club member. All club vehicles must have, as a minimum, liability insurance which must be verified by at least one club officer. All club members must have safe (legal) tires on their bikes during all club functions or rides. No club vehicles will be allowed to perform in any public function with major damage. Each member serves as a safety officer and is responsible to identify and correct any condition that threatens the welfare of club members or the general public. Any willful act of unsafe riding witnessed by a fellow club member(s) could result in denial of membership. Members may plead their case at the next meeting.

5. Activities will be conducted to encourage participation by all club members. Also, no laws will be enacted which favor or separate members by type of motorcycle.
6. No member will ride in an impaired physical condition. Members will always try to prevent other members from riding in an impaired condition.
7. Members will always hold

the club in high regard. A member will never angrily accost, assault, or slander any other fellow club member.

8. Members will embrace and encourage an atmosphere of skill improvement, responsible riding and riding enjoyment, while discouraging aggressive, competitive, and potentially self-destructive riding behaviors.

9. Potential new members must meet all club prerequisites, to include two rides with the group and reading and signing all club documentation, before final membership is granted. No individual will be denied entry based on race, creed, religion, or sex.

10. All candidates for club membership must possess a motorcycle, or plan to obtain one, before final membership is granted.

11. There will be no alcoholic beverages consumed during club meetings. Abusive language (profanity) of any type, or illegal substances are prohibited for any club members during club meetings or any club functions, especially in the presence of family members and/or minors.

12. Illegal drug use by any club member will not be tolerated. If a member of the club is confirmed to be a user or distributor of illegal drugs, he/she will be removed from the club.

13. The Executive Board has the authority to remove club members for conduct that is not in keeping with the standards of the club and is in violation of rules 11 and 12 above. A majority vote by the club members present can be used to dismiss any member for violation of club rules. Members will be required to discuss the proposed action in an open forum with all members present before a vote is cast pertaining to the disposition of a club member. The club President and Vice

President will inform verbally and in writing any member who, after a vote of the membership, is dismissed from membership.


14. No individual member of the club will accumulate debt or obligate the club in any financial contract except members of the Executive Board. Any debt or contract entered into must be within the best interests of the club. All club obligations will be presented to the general membership at the next scheduled meeting and can be nullified by a majority vote of club members present.

15. If a member is terminated from the club, he or she will not be allowed to participate in club activities or display the

club patch. The club emblem must be removed from the ex-member's motorcycle.

16. All club members are adults and will be treated as such during club meetings, functions and dealings.

17. The club will hold regular meetings to conduct club business and execute the charter and bylaws of the organization.

18. The club will conform to all guidelines in AR 210-22 and operate as a private organization on Fort Sam Houston, Texas. 

Rolling Thunder... Matching Riders to Machines

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Managing Editor

Back in the 1960s and 70s, it was common for young riders with limited budgets to start off on small bikes like the Honda 90. These low-powered machines may not have provided thrilling performance, but they normally allowed riders to survive and learn from their mistakes. Such is not always the case today. New riders, and others with limited experience, are buying machines that easily eclipse the most potent 1970s bikes. Without an adequate learning curve to help them, these riders sometimes get into deadly trouble. Just check the excerpts from the Preliminary Loss Reports below:

The 30-year-old SSG was riding a 2006 Suzuki GSX 1300 RK6 Hayabusa when he lost control just before entering a 35-mph curve. The motorcycle struck the curb, left the road and ejected the SSG into a pine tree. He was taken to a local medical facility, where he later died from blunt force trauma to the chest. The Suzuki Web site states the Hayabusa is "the fastest production bike on the planet." The Soldier was wearing all required PPE, was properly licensed and had completed the Army-approved Motorcycle Safety Foundation course. The investigative police officer stated speed and inattentiveness were factors.

The 22-year-old SGT was riding a 2003 Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle with two other motorcyclists when he entered a curve, braked quickly and was thrown into the guardrail head first. The other motorcyclists turned around and flagged down several motorists for assistance. The NCO was wearing a

DOT-approved helmet and required PPE. ... Speeding was a factor.

Picking a "first" bike

While high-powered sports bikes aren't the smart choice for inexperienced riders, few would want to start out on a moped. Because new riders sometimes don't know what bike is best for them, members of the Fort



Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, will help them. As part of their mentorship program, club members will accompany prospective buyers and help them select motorcycles matched to their skills and riding style.

How important can that be? Club President James V. Stubblefield tells a story about a new rider who bought a Ducati motorcycle, rode it across the dealership lot and then dropped it while turning onto the street. The Soldier picked up the bike, rode it a couple of blocks and dropped it again. The Soldier again picked up his bike, rode it a few more blocks and dropped it a third time. Discouraged and realizing he'd made a mistake, he called a friend to come get him. Together, they loaded the bike onto a pickup,

drove to the post's "Lemon Lot" and put the bike up for sale. The bike, now used and damaged, sold for a lot less than the Soldier paid for it. An expensive lesson learned.

That mistake doesn't have to be repeated. Stubblefield described how mentors help new riders select bikes they'll be happy with.

"Experience is the number one thing—if the rider has ever ridden or not," he said. That issue is important, Stubblefield explained, because some riders are returning to motorcycling after a break of several years, while other riders are new to the sport. Returning riders, despite having past experience, can be rusty on their skills, requiring their own learning curve.

Matching riders to the right-size bike is also essential, Stubblefield said. He checks riders to see if they can place both feet flat on the ground while sitting on the bike. "I want to know if you can touch the ground and maneuver the bike ... and if the bike falls over, can you pick up?"

While Stubblefield rides a Harley-Davidson cruiser, Ezell Powell, the club's vice president, rides a sport bike. Understanding the power of these machines, he offers new riders an opportunity to test ride his Suzuki 1000 at low speeds in a controlled environment. If, after the test, the rider wants a sport bike, Powell will suggest a smaller-engine model that will allow the rider to develop his skills before tackling something larger.

Unfortunately, some riders jump the gun.

"One of the things I've seen in the sport bike community is guys trying to move up too fast. ... I've seen guys start out on a

(Suzuki) Hayabusa, and that's not a starter bike," Powell said. Such riders, he explained, often make that choice thinking they might as well start off with the bike they'll end up with. Unfortunately, that choice leaves them few chances for mistakes and typically leads to serious problems. Some riders have close calls or serious accidents and give up riding. Others are disappointed because they invested heavily in a motorcycle they don't enjoy riding. Finally, some don't survive their mistakes to go on to be better riders. These are all things, Powell said, the club is trying to prevent.

Stubblefield and Powell offered the following suggestions for first-time riders selecting a motorcycle. Stubblefield said most new riders drop their bikes several times and suggested they look for a used bike with a smaller engine—perhaps in the 250cc range. Not only are these machines easier to ride and less likely to be dropped, but when they are, the result isn't hundreds of dollars in damage. Such bikes, he said, can always be sold to someone else when the rider is ready for something bigger. Powell added riders also have the option of buying new bikes designed for first-time sport bike

and cruiser riders. Example of such bikes are the * Kawasaki Ninja® EX250 sport bike and Honda's Rebel 250 cruiser. These 250cc machines allow riders to have fun while working their way up the learning curve. New riders are more likely to become life-long riders when they learn in manageable steps, not uncontrolled slides and collisions.

** Editor's Note: These motorcycles are mentioned as examples; however, their mention neither represents nor implies Army endorsement of these products. Contact the author at (334) 255-2688, DSN 558-2688, or by e-mail at robert.vanelsberg@crc.army.mil.*

Only One Chance

“But, officer, I didn't see him!”—that's the standard excuse most drivers use after hitting a motorcyclist. However, when a motorcycle is the size of a longhorn steer, is covered in chrome, has shining tail lights and pipes louder than thunder, how can a driver fail to “see” it? Yet, as Jim Stubblefield, president of the Fort Sam Rough Riders Motorcycle Riding Club explained, it sometimes happens.

“I was stopped at a red light, going to work at 6:30 in the morning,” he said. “I was wearing my helmet and all my safety gear, including boots, long pants, long-sleeve shirt, full-fingered gloves and reflective vest.”

As he waited at the light, he did what he'd been taught three weeks earlier when he took the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's (MSF) Experienced RiderCourseSM training. Pressing

downward with his right foot on the rear brake and squeezing the front brake lever with his right hand, he used his left foot to hold the bike up. As he sat there and waited for the light to change, a careless and hurried driver slammed into the back of his motorcycle. The impact threw Stubblefield over the handlebars and onto the street ahead, where he wound up flat on the ground. At that moment, the fact he'd followed his training and had both brakes on suddenly became very important.

“I believed that's what saved me because my motorcycle stopped the car,” he said. “If the bike had rolled forward, it probably would have flipped over on top of me, and I would have been banged up really bad.”

Instead of landing on top of him, Stubblefield's Harley took the impact, rolled forward slightly and then fell and stopped the car behind. The rear of the bike was smashed, but Stubblefield got



up and walked away, no worse for wear other than just a little soreness. When he took off his helmet, he saw a gash in the back where it had hit the street—mute testimony to the value of having worn it.

Because Stubblefield followed his MSF training and wore his helmet, he survived an accident he couldn't have anticipated or avoided. When motorcycles compete with cars on the highway, sometimes riders get only one chance to get it right.

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CONNECTIONS

Information on the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's rider training programs and locations can be found on their Web site at <http://www.msf-usa.org/>.

Your Helmet Is It The Real Thing?

National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration

It's clear—helmets save lives. Motorcycle riders who do not wear helmets are 40 percent more likely to incur fatal head injuries than riders who do. From 1984 through 1990, helmets saved the lives of more than 4,740 motorcyclists. To help protect the lives of motorcycle riders, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) requires all motorcycle helmets sold in the United States meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218.



Each year, DOT conducts compliance testing on a variety of motorcycle helmets to determine whether helmets being sold in the United States meet the federal safety standard. Because helmets add such a critical margin of safety for motorcycle riders, many states now have laws requiring the use of helmets that meet FMVSS 218 requirements.

Increasingly, though, motorcycle riders are violating these state laws by wearing cheap and unsafe helmets that do not meet FMVSS 218. Most of these helmets are sold as novelty items by unscrupulous merchants to circumvent the FMVSS 218 requirements. In some cases, people purchase these helmets in the mistaken belief they offer protection. However, many people who wear these novelty helmets know they are unsafe—but wear them anyway. The following information will tell you how to spot these unsafe novelty helmets and how to distinguish them from helmets that meet the federal safety standard.

ITEMS TO CHECK FOR:

• DOT Sticker

Helmets that meet FMVSS 218 must have a sticker on the outside back with the letters DOT, which certifies the helmet meets or exceeds FMVSS 218. It is important to note some sellers of novelty helmets provide DOT stickers separately for motorcyclists to place on non-complying helmets. In this case, the DOT sticker is invalid and does not certify compliance.

The symbol "DOT" constitutes the manufacturer's certification the helmet conforms to the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. This symbol shall appear on the outer surface in a color that contrasts with the background in letters at least 3/8 of an inch high and centered laterally approximately 1 1/4 inches from the bottom edge of the posterior portion of the helmet.

An interpretation letter from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states the requirement that helmets be permanently labeled

HELMETS THAT MEET FMVSS 218 MUST HAVE A STICKER ON THE OUTSIDE BACK WITH THE LETTERS DOT, WHICH CERTIFIES THE HELMET MEETS OR EXCEEDS FMVSS 218.

and prohibits the use of labels that can be removed by hand without tools or chemicals. Therefore, a sticker that falls off the helmet would not appear to be in compliance within the meaning of FMVSS 218.

- **Snell or ANSI Sticker**

In addition to the DOT sticker, labels located inside the helmet showing it meets the standards of private organizations like Snell or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) are a good indicator the helmet meets the federal safety standard. To date, we have never seen a novelty helmet that has a phony DOT sticker plus a phony Snell or ANSI sticker.

- **Manufacturer's Labeling**

Manufacturers are required by FMVSS 218 to place a label on or inside the helmet stating the manufacturer's name, model, size, month and year of manufacture, construction materials, and owner information. A cheap helmet that does not meet the federal safety standard usually does not have such a label.

- **Thick Inner Liner**

Helmets meeting the minimum federal safety standard have an inner liner—usually about 1-inch thick—of firm polystyrene foam. Sometimes the inner liner will not be visible, but you should still be able to feel its thickness. Unsafe helmets normally contain only soft foam padding or a bare plastic shell with no foam at all.

- **Sturdy Chin Straps**

Helmets meeting the DOT safety standard have sturdy chin straps with solid rivets.

- **Weight of Helmet**

Depending on design, unsafe helmets weigh only 1 pound or less—helmets

meeting FMVSS 218 weigh about 3 pounds. Become familiar with the weight of helmets that comply with the federal safety standard. They feel more substantial.

- **Design/Style of Helmet**

The DOT safety standard does not allow anything to extend further than 2/10 of an inch from the surface of a helmet. For example, while visor fasteners are allowed, a spike or other protruding decoration indicates an unsafe helmet.

A design such as the German Army style or skullcap style may be a clue to an unsafe helmet. Unsafe helmets are noticeably smaller in diameter and thinner than one meeting the DOT standard. However, some German Army-style helmets may meet federal requirements. You'll need to check for weight, thickness and sturdy chin straps, as well as the "DOT" and manufacturer's labels, to make sure the helmet meets the federal safety standard.

Try to become familiar with brand names and designs of helmets that comply with DOT requirements. For example, a full-face design is a good indicator of a safe helmet. We have never seen a full-face design novelty helmet.

SUMMARY

Remember, a DOT sticker on the back of the helmet and proper inside labeling do not necessarily prove a helmet meets all DOT requirements. Many helmets have phony DOT stickers and a limited few also have manufacturer's labeling. But the design and weight of a helmet, thickness of the inner liner, and quality of the chin strap and rivets are extra clues to help distinguish safe helmets from non-complying ones.

REMEMBER, A DOT STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE HELMET AND PROPER INSIDE LABELING DO NOT NECESSARILY PROVE A HELMET MEETS ALL DOT REQUIREMENTS.

Is it the Real Thing?



NOVELTY HELMETS NOT ONLY WASTE MONEY, THEY WASTE LIVES. THIS NOVELTY HELMET FAILED ITS WEARER, RESULTING IN HORRIFIC HEAD INJURIES.

Check It or Wreck It?

LEONARD MCMILLEN
CP-12 Safety Intern

Just buy a used bike? All shined up and looks really sharp, right? So you throw your leg over the seat and take off, eager to ride your new machine. But did you really check the bike closely, or were you so hot to ride you missed something? Could be you might end your ride on your head—not on your bike. Here's my story.

It was early March and the weather was beginning to warm up in Oklahoma. With nice riding weather coming, I purchased a used Suzuki 1100. Before I bought the bike, I took it for a test ride and everything seemed fine. That was good enough for me. The guy I bought it from said he'd just completely disassembled the bike and repainted it. I never bothered to inspect the motor, wheels, bearings or any other part of the bike. It looked and rode good, and that's all I cared about. It never occurred to me how important it might be to closely inspect the front wheel and all its parts.

Early one morning, I decided to take about a 45-minute trip on my bike to a neighboring town to visit some friends. Although it was March, it still got quite cool at times, so I wore my coveralls over my jeans and jacket. Oklahoma didn't have a helmet law then, and I usually didn't wear my helmet. However, I decided to wear it that day to keep my ears warm. Thank God for the cool weather!

About 15 minutes into my trip, I felt a great jolt in the front forks and wheel. Before I could put my foot on the brake,

it happened again and the bike flipped end over end. I was thrown clear, but I was going so fast I went bouncing and rolling for nearly 50 yards. Fortunately, I didn't get tangled up in the bike. The bike was trashed and I'd broken my wrist, dislocated my shoulder and had some serious road rash. I credit my helmet and extra clothing with saving my life and preventing worse injuries.

In the end, I discovered there was only one bolt holding the front fender when there should have been two. When that bolt eventu-

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it on. You need to be wearing it where it will do you the most good—on your head.

Also, failing to completely inspect a motorcycle before buying and riding it can be a financially and physically costly mistake. Just because a bike looks good doesn't mean it is. And just because everything seems OK during the test ride doesn't mean there isn't a hidden problem waiting to bite you. As I found out, it's better to check it than wreck it.

Contact the author at (405) 739-3263, or by e-mail at leonard.mcmillen@us.army.mil.



Rollin' with Yongsan's "RoadDragons"



Every Saturday morning you'll see them gathered outside the Townhouse Food Court on Yongsan Main Post, Korea. They're Soldiers, retired military, Army civilians, contractors, Korean nationals and people from just about anywhere. While they come from many different backgrounds, what they have in common is their love for motorcycling. Before the sun climbs much above the horizon, the rumble of motorcycle engines reverberating in the Land of the Morning Calm will signal the Yongsan "RoadDragons" Motorcycle Club are on the road.

It's not the first time the group has taken to the road for an all-day cruise or an overnight trip. Since the early 1980s, the club's riders have toured the roads of Korea, seeing and enjoying the fascinating land around them. From the start, they understood riding requires complex skills beginners don't have and can't expect to master on their own.

Long before the Army's Motorcycle Mentorship Program (MMP) came into being, the club began pairing experienced riders

with novices to develop those skills. Early on, leaders in Korea recognized safety and readiness were two strands of the same rope. They understood a Soldier lost in a motorcycle accident weakened the uneasy line separating North and South Korea as much as a Soldier lost in training. Before Composite Risk Management (CRM) was defined, they recognized successful safety programs preserved combat power, effectively becoming a force multiplier in the face of risk. But maybe best of all, they understood Soldiers who chose to be safe off duty often brought that attitude on post.

Yet, the RoadDragon's focus on safety isn't entirely limited to off-duty rides, meetings or events. Having been approved as a private organization supporting the Area II commander's motorcycle accident prevention program, they provide a forum for motorcycle education and safety awareness. They do that by conducting mentorship training seminars to improve rider skills, educating members on how CRM can help them when riding and conducting clinics on purchasing and maintaining motorcycles.

Safety is a built-in requirement for membership.

To join the club, riders must have a Motorcycle Safety Foundation

(MSF) course completion card, a motorcycle endorsement on their United States Forces, Korea license, and maintain insurance as required by Korean and U.S. law.

In addition to riding, the club promotes a positive relationship with

the surrounding community by sponsoring a local orphanage and a motorcycle shop. Club members actively support the Korean Association of Retired Persons and participate in the HI-Seoul City Festival. The RoadDragons also support community events including the Fourth of July and Columbus Day parades, the Area II Auto-Bike Show, the Combined Federal Campaign Organization Day and the Veterans Day Ride.

Club Safety and Maintenance Officer Sam Berry said the club's goal is to support the command's emphasis on safety while also fostering Korean and American relations. He explained that by meeting and riding with local Korean clubs, members of both organizations can share their experiences and lessons learned. This forum, he added, is particularly valuable because it allows the RoadDragons to learn about specific safety concerns when riding in Korea. This interaction between an Army-recognized club and local national clubs benefits both groups. "Together, we can and will make riding in Korea a safe and enjoyable experience for all motorcyclists," Berry said.

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from a story printed in The Morning Calm newspaper.

CONNECTIONS

For more information on the RoadDragons, visit their Web site at www.roaddragons.com.

Motorcycle Recalls

Listed below are selected motorcycle recalls and a helmet recall issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) during 2005. If you own one of the listed vehicles, contact your nearest dealership to have the problem corrected. If you purchased a used motorcycle, provide your nearest dealership with your vehicle model, year of manufacture and vehicle identification number to find out if there is a recall. For recalls on 2004 and earlier motorcycles, you can visit the NHTSA Web page at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

BMW

- **I200LT.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, at lower temperatures, wiring within the anti-theft control unit may press against the fuel pump relay. The fuel pump relay contacts could open, interrupting the fuel supply to the engine, resulting in stalling. If stalling were to occur, the driver would be unable to maintain speed or accelerate, increasing the risk of a crash.

- **RI200GS.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, exposure of the throttle housing to road debris could restrict the movement of the throttle cable pulley. That, in turn, could affect throttle operation and increase the risk of a crash.

- **RI200GS.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, an adapter in the rear brake line connects a rigid section to a flexible section. If the rigid section is not properly engaged in the adapter, it is possible for a leak to develop. This will result in a loss of brake fluid, reducing or eliminating rear braking capability and increasing the risk of a crash. For more information, owners should contact BMW at 1-800-831-1117.

Harley-Davidson

- **Sportster, Dyna and Softail.** Defect: Certain motorcycles have been produced with defective fuel shutoff valves where the "On" and "Reserve" positions have been reversed. If the bike is operated with the valve in the "On" position, the bike could run out of fuel, increasing the risk of a crash.

- **Dyna, XL, Softail and V-Rod.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, a condition occurs that could allow pressure to build up in the fuel tank. On fuel-injected vehicles, this condition could cause fuel to spray out unexpectedly when the fuel cap is removed. On carbureted vehicles, excessive fuel could be transferred to the carburetor, which would eventually allow fuel to drip from the air cleaner. These situations create a fire hazard that could cause serious personal injury to riders. For more information, owners should contact Harley-Davidson at 414-342-4080.

Victory

- **Hammer.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, the fuel supply hose leading from the fuel tank to the fuel rail may be incorrect for use in a pressurized fuel system application and may leak fuel or crack. Fuel leakage, in the presence of an ignition source, could result in a fire.

- **Hammer, Kingpin, Ness Kingpin, Ness Vegas, Vegas and Vegas 8-Ball.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, the camshaft chain drive sprocket located on the crankshaft may have been cracked upon installation. If cracks are present, the sprocket may fail and cause the engine to lock up, which



could cause the operator to lose control and increase the risk of a crash. For more information, owners should contact Victory at 763-417-8650.

Suzuki

- **VL800 and VZ 800.** Defect: On certain motorcycles, the ignition switch wiring harness may have been improperly routed at the time of production. This can cause the wiring harness to rub against the clutch and cable throttles. Continued rubbing can lead to a short circuit which may cause the engine to stall or the lights to go out, increasing the risk of a crash resulting in serious injury or death.

- **SV650 and SV1000S.** Defect: On certain California-specification model motorcycles, repeated stress from vibration can cause a crack in the area where the liquid/vapor separator bracket is welded inside the fuel tank. This can cause fuel leakage to occur, which, in the presence of an ignition source, could result in a fire.

- **AN650.** Defect: On certain scooters, the fuel pump retaining ring may have been improperly installed. If the fuel pump retaining ring is not properly seated on the fuel tank, the ring can be deformed during normal expansion of the fuel tank. This could cause a fuel leak which, in the presence of an ignition source, could result in a fire and the risk of serious injury or death. For more information, owners should contact American

Suzuki at 714-572-1490.

Triumph

- Rocket III. Defect: On certain motorcycles, damage to the oil seal occurred during final assembly and could allow oil in the drive unit to escape past the seal. If undetected, the final drive unit could run low on oil and cause the rear wheel to lock up, which could result in a crash.

- Daytona 955I, Speed Triple, Sprint ST, Sprint ST ABS. Defect: On certain motorcycles, the lower bypass coolant hose can rupture. A loss of coolant from the engine can result in the engine overheating and seizing, which could result in a crash. For more information, owners should contact Triumph at 678-854-2010.

Yamaha

- XVS11, XV250 and XVS65. Defect: On certain motorcycles, the mounting hardware holding the passenger seat to the fender could loosen due to the shifting of the passenger's weight. If the mounting hardware becomes loose enough, the passenger seat can fall off the rear fender. A passenger on the motorcycle could lose balance and fall and suffer serious injury or death. Editor's Note: This recall affects 179,042 motorcycles.

- Virago 250, XT225T, XT225TC, XV250T, XV250TC, YW50T and Zuma. Defect: On certain motorcycles and scooters, the rear brake shoe material could separate due to improper adhesive curing. If such separation occurs during

operation, rear-wheel braking ability will be reduced or lost, which could cause a crash. For more information, owners should contact Yamaha at 1-800-889-2624.

Helmet Recall

Helmet City (HCI)

- HCI 100 and 100G (2004 and 2005). Defect: All sizes of these helmets manufactured between Oct. 1, 2004, and April 29, 2005, fail to meet the retention standards of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 218. The stitching on the right-side ear flap is insufficient. In the event of a crash, the ear flap can rip and leave the wearer unprotected, possibly resulting in head injuries. For more information, owners should contact HCI at 888-550-3731.

Need For Speed

CPT CHARLES MOPPS
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Fort Jackson, S.C.

After reading the May-June issue of *ImpaX* and noting the information dedicated to motorcycle riding, I thought I'd contribute a few thoughts that might help your readers who enjoy going fast on a motorcycle.

I have been on some form of motorcycle for more than 30 years and was a Harley-Davidson/Buell test rider the year prior to my deploying to Bosnia. I earned my Road Race Competition License in 2003, and last year at the 22nd annual Race of Champions, I finished 14th in Expert Thunderbike and 6th in Expert GT Lights.

The articles "The Need for Speed" and "The Race" talked about how important it is NOT to race on public roads. Racing on the street can cost a rider his license, his career and even his life. Besides, riders have the option of racing safely and legally. By simply going online to <http://www.nesba.com/>, riders can find local tracks and information on how to enter races there.

Riders who head for the track must be prepared with the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and ready to have their bikes given a safety inspection. Riders who don't have the required race leathers can normally rent them at the track. Riders are also broken down into groups according to their skill level to keep the races competitive and safe.

The benefits of track racing include legally running at high speeds, knowing everyone else is going in the same direction, having corner workers to assist you and being in a controlled environment free of cross traffic and other hazards. In addition, tracks often offer riders racing schools and the chance to seek tips from successful competition riders.

The "Don't Be Hard Headed" article hit an important point often overlooked when it comes to motorcycle PPE. Basically, don't add anything to your protective equipment the manufacturer didn't design to be there. I made that mistake once when I purchased a new helmet that didn't have the color visor I wanted. I purchased an aftermarket stick-on piece to use. Despite the manufacturer's claims otherwise, it came off and jammed against my face while I was doing approximately 160 mph at Daytona. Just remember, performance doesn't always equal advertising.

Making sure your helmet fits properly is also important. You want a snug fit so your head won't move around and slam against the inside of your helmet during a crash. During the motorcycle safety inspections I perform in my company, I check the fit of each rider's helmet. I also inspect each helmet for damage and check to make sure it has the proper safety ratings. The DOT certification is the most common standard; however, if you purchase a helmet which also includes a SNELL rating, then you're getting an even safer helmet tested to a tougher standard. Also, if a rider's helmet has been in an accident, I tell that rider to replace it because that helmet can no longer be trusted to meet the safety standards it was certified for.

The most important piece of safety gear is riding with the proper attitude. You'll have more fun if you avoid letting your intentions overcome your abilities.



accident Briefs

POM

Class A

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he failed to negotiate a curve. The Soldier sustained injury to his vertebrae and is paralyzed from the waist down. The Soldier was wearing a helmet.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he reportedly struck a vehicle on the side. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene. The Soldier was wearing his helmet and personal protective equipment (PPE).

- A Soldier was operating a motorcycle when a highway patrol car reportedly pulled out in front of him. The Soldier lost control of

his motorcycle, resulting in an accident in which the Soldier was fatally injured. The Soldier was wearing his helmet.

- A Soldier was operating a motorcycle when a vehicle pulled out in front of him. The Soldier struck the rear of the vehicle and was pronounced dead at the scene. Helmet and PPE use were not reported.

- A Soldier was fatally injured when he lost control of his motorcycle, hit a curb and overturned. The Soldier was transported to a medical facility, where he died from his injuries. The Soldier was not wearing a helmet.

- A Soldier lost control of his motorcycle on a road that had

transitioned to gravel. The Soldier, who was not wearing his helmet, suffered fatal injuries when he was thrown from the motorcycle.

- An Army Reserve Soldier was en route to inactive duty training when his motorcycle was forced off the road by a tractor-trailer. The Soldier lost control and overturned. He later died from his injuries.

- A Soldier lost control of his motorcycle when the road he was traveling on curved left near a private connector road. Going too fast to make the turn, the Soldier went straight and hit a curb, leaving the road and continuing forward, leaving two furrows in the dirt. Thrown from

his motorcycle when it left the road, the Soldier struck a large tree and came to rest at its base. The motorcycle ended up in a ditch several feet beyond the tree. The Soldier was transported to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The police officer filing the report included speed and driver inattentiveness as possible contributing factors to the Soldier losing control. The Soldier was wearing a full-face helmet and a motorcycle jacket with reflective panels. He had redeployed from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) III in January 2006 after a year-long deployment. He was an experienced rider, often riding his motorcycle to work on days when the weather was good.

- A Soldier was riding another Soldier's motorcycle at a reportedly high rate of speed when he lost control, struck a curb and overturned. The Soldier, who was not wearing a helmet, suffered a fatal head injury.

- A Soldier was operating his motorcycle when he crossed the center lane, struck the curb and tumbled end over end. The Soldier, who was not wearing a helmet, suffered massive head trauma and died the next morning.

- A Soldier was in rest and recreation leave status from OIF when he was fatally injured while operating a

motorcycle. The Soldier reportedly drifted onto the shoulder and overturned. He was not wearing a helmet.

- A Soldier was operating his motorcycle when he ran into the rear of a construction truck. The Soldier was taken to the hospital, where he later died from his injuries. He was not wearing a helmet.

- A Soldier was riding a Honda CBR 600 he'd purchased the week before when he entered a turn and lost control. The Soldier, who'd given his helmet to his passenger, sustained severe head injuries and was evacuated to a local medical

center, where he was pronounced dead. The passenger was treated for minor injuries and released. The Soldier had never informed his chain of command he'd purchased a motorcycle. The Soldier had received a briefing covering motorcycle safety from his commander during a unit formation. However, the Soldier had never attended a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course.

- The Soldier was test driving a motorcycle when an oncoming vehicle turned left in front of him. The Soldier applied the brakes and skidded approximately 62 feet. Just prior to impact, the motorcycle's rear

wheel came up and launched the Soldier into the vehicle's right-rear passenger side. The Soldier was transported to a hospital, where he died during surgery.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he failed to yield right-of-way and collided with a van, resulting in serious injuries. The Soldier was taken to a hospital, where he died during surgery.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when a drunk driver failed to yield right-of-way and pulled into his path. The Soldier collided with the driver's side of the car. The Soldier and his passenger were thrown from the bike and



POM

Class A

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- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when a drunk driver failed to yield right-of-way and pulled into his path. The Soldier collided with the driver's side of the car. The Soldier and his passenger were thrown from the bike and

suffered fatal injuries. The Soldier was not wearing his helmet.

- A Soldier was operating his motorcycle in the left lane when he was observed to have lost control and was thrown from his bike. He later died from his injuries.

- A Soldier was operating his motorcycle with a fellow rider when he struck a guardrail. The Soldier was transferred to the local medical center, where he died from his injuries.

Class B

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when he was struck by a pickup whose driver improperly changed lanes. The Soldier was dragged down the street for approximately 50 feet and suffered a concussion and a fractured left leg. The Soldier was wearing his helmet and all PPE.

- A Soldier was riding his motorcycle when a car pulled in front of him. When the Soldier swerved to avoid the car, he rear-ended a truck. The Soldier's motorcycle

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